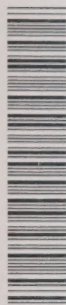


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Publicity and public relations

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Notes for
community leaders



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The public needs to understand

Public relations has come a long way since our great-grandparent's time. In their day, the community merchant's idea of public relations was to place a few chairs between the stove and the cracker-barrel so that customers could be comfortable while they waited for the mail.

What we now call public relations, the merchant called common sense or being neighborly.

The result of this simple system was that the neighbors spent some of their spare time in the general store. They learned about the storekeeper's business. They knew who the customers were, what stock was carried, where it was bought and why. They could see quite clearly that their own needs became the storekeeper's needs. They knew that the store was a vital part of their community.

Although the general store has almost disappeared as a community institution, a modern community often takes pride in the work done by one or two voluntary organizations. To succeed, these organizations must tailor their programs to the community's needs and interest. Many citizens fully support an organization because they understand what it is trying to achieve.

Building that understanding is the basis of the publicity and public relations job.

The job sounds simple enough, but it is a big job—and a year-round job.

The more the people of the community know about the work of an organization, the more clearly they will see its aims in terms of their own lives. The publicity or public relations committee has the job of answering all their questions.

All citizens have the right to know how the achievement of the organization's purpose will affect them—the kind of community they live in, their family's welfare, their leisure time, their personal development.

Every organization in the community is asking the citizens for their attention and support. The most successful committee is not necessarily the one that puts all its resources into a noisy annual campaign.

Lasting public attitudes are not developed through the occasional showy blitz.

The best publicity job is usually the most thorough, persistent and intensive—the one that reminds the community about the organization's work year-in and year-out.

The whole job of public relations cannot be left to a committee. The standing of the organization in the community is affected by every one of its operations, from the promptness of conveners in returning borrowed material to the contents of its most important programs.

Some ways to build positive public attitudes

Every officer, every committee and even every member can help by doing the following things.

☐ *Always remember to say "please" and "thank you".* When plans touch in any way the interests or rights of individuals or other organizations, co-operation should be courteously sought. Whenever help is received, however insignificant, it should be acknowledged with thanks. No volunteer should ever be left to wonder whether this effort has been appreciated. The notes of appreciation or congratulation that take the recipient by surprise—the ones that did not have to be written—are sometimes important.

☐ *Never abuse privileges.* Borrowed property should be returned promptly and in good condition. Whenever the organization has been granted the privilege of using facilities not its own, it should make sure that they are left clean and undamaged. It is also important that the program conducted around any borrowed facility should not in any way damage the prestige or

the sensibilities of those who own the facility. A careful placing of responsibility and close attention to detail in planning will forestall the most common forms of damage and abuse.

☐ *Always handle beefs frankly and tactfully.* From time to time every organization is bound to incur criticism. Some individual or group may, for some reason, feel slighted or quite sincerely believe that some action is wrong. If it is possible, it is always best to meet such challenges face-to-face, and to try to satisfy the people involved with full explanations, with frank apologies if they are in order. In times of stress, it is a sign of maturity to be able to shoulder the blame with good grace.

☐ *Always co-operate with other community organizations.* It is a wise organization that avoids unnecessary competition for public support. The courtesy is likely to be returned if other groups are advised of the timing of our plans, and if every effort is made to avoid duplicating exactly the work done by another group.

☐ *Never boast.* Public confidence in an organization can only be built on its real accomplishments. Extravagant statements in annual reports, in briefs, or even in conversation, pay poor dividends in the long run.

☐ *Never be guilty of malicious criticism.* When it becomes necessary to oppose the opinion, or object to the procedures of another group or individual, the executive and the organization as a whole should be sure that their objections are valid, and that they are openly and courteously stated.

☐ *Always plan programs carefully.* Meetings should begin and end at the times advertised. No meeting should ever be allowed to collapse because some contingency has not been foreseen in the planning; alternative programs are part of all good planning. Plenty of time should be allowed for notification of the participants and for the publicity. And, of course, the quality of the programs themselves is the most important item of all in public relations and publicity.

☐ *Always keep facilities neat and tidy.* The public tends to make judgments on the basis of public appearances. Any facility that the organization owns or operates should be thoroughly maintained so that it is always presentable and a credit to the neighborhood. It should also be clearly identified with the organization's name or symbol.

☐ *Beg only when it is necessary.* The merchants of any community can be asked once too often for free goods or for other contributions. The editors of local publications and the directors of TV and radio stations will feel more kindly toward organizations that pay for advertising from time to time. As many as possible of the services needed by the organization should be included in its budget so that it will not make every appearance in the role of the begging poor relation.

☐ *Always keep channels of communication open and clear.* The members of the organization, volunteers in its programs, and the community at large, will find it much easier to identify themselves with the work of the organization if they regularly receive information about it, and if they have a ready means of communicating their own ideas to the executive level of the organization. Telephone calls and letters of enquiry should be answered with care and patience. Correspondence should be taken care of within 24 hours of its receipt.

Policy and public relations

What an organization is able to accomplish, and its whole growth and development, may depend on what the community thinks about its goals and the way its members go about achieving them. When an organization has prestige in the community, new members are continually attracted to it. Its campaigns for support are usually successful. It is often able to influence public attitudes on the community issues that affect its work.

The policies that govern the operations of an organization need to be evaluated for their effect on public relations. The publicity committee does not, of course, control policy but it can help everyone to understand the connections between public relations and the pattern of the organization's development.

Keep in mind the following:

☐ A democratic policy of rotating officers and setting up committees whose members represent many groups in the community may help to allay the suspicion that a clique runs everything in the organization.

☐ The way in which minority opinions are handled within the organization often has repercussions in the community.

☐ Full use of the conference method to survey problems and to present information keeps an organization in close touch with the current needs of the community. Many voluntary associations arrange and sponsor representative fact-finding conferences and regular staff conferences and inter-group conferences.

☐ Official statements of aims and objectives, precisely outlined in clear language, can make powerful impressions on the public attitude.

☐ Full, candid reports of accomplishment may take the sting out of criticism that is based on half-truths and rumors.

☐ A policy of carefully orienting new members and volunteers can also contribute to public relations in the community. Every new member who has a clear understanding of the organization's purposes and programs represents an additional channel of communication to some part of the community.

The job of the publicity committee

It is the job of the publicity committee to make a detailed plan for releasing to the public a continuous stream of information about the work of the organization. In addition, the members must be ready to make quick-witted use of every opportunity that presents itself to relate the organization's purposes to life in the community.

The publicity chairperson needs a good hard-working committee with no free-riders. It is particularly important that these committee members have a complete understanding of the organization's history, policies and present objectives. Just as soon as publicity releases begin to lose sight of the underlying purposes they are off the track, and much of the effort is likely to be wasted.

An alert and flexible committee soon learns how to appeal to the various groups in the community. Experience makes it sensitive to changes in the prevailing attitudes. If the community has tired of some once-useful gimmick that has become hackneyed, the committee should be aware of it. If some new fad or idea is on everyone's mind, a poster or a circular may be tied to it and get immediate attention.

To be effective, the ordinary publicity tools, posters, news items, displays, pamphlets and letters need to be pulled together around a single theme or emphasis. Even reports prepared for general distribution in the community are unattractive reading unless a few points are selected for special emphasis. It is almost impossible to present a total picture of an organization in one publicity job. Because just one or two ideas may be presented at a time, the publicity committee will have to take special care that a balanced image of the organization is spelled out in its long-range plan.

Timing is the element in the publicity plan that requires most attention. Nearly every publicity effort is more time-consuming than it appears. The committee must also learn to work with printers, editors, radio and television directors to whom deadlines are sacred. When they have learned that meeting deadlines

means starting earlier, they will have to educate all the planning groups in the organization.

Planning that is not completed in time to let the publicity people do an adequate job is not good planning. The most carefully laid plan for the most important program will have little effect in the community if the people who should have participated hear about it after it is over.

The publicity committee will need the support and co-operation of the executive and planning committees in many fields.

The ideas and data that are the raw material of the publicity program must be supplied to the committee continuously. Its members must be kept informed about long-range plans for the future.

Other committees may be co-ordinating information that can be used in the publicity plan. Such things as annual reports and newsletters are useful publicity tools if they are attractively prepared and written in a form that has wide appeal. The responsible committee may seek help from the publicity committee in their production. In some organizations these publications are turned over to the publicity people for final editing and production.

From time to time the publicity committee may have to call on the general membership for volunteers if it plans any large-scale or door-to-door operation in the community.

Much of the effectiveness of a publicity committee may depend on the relationship its chairperson or convener is able to develop with the local newspaper editors and radio program directors.

These busy people are doing complicated and exacting jobs requiring the meshing of a great many details. They usually have more stories than they have space or time to tell. The publicity chairperson and the committee members, can help keep the relationship cordial by preparing their material carefully, delivering it in good time to meet deadlines, and accepting graciously whatever editorial cuts and rearrangements are considered necessary to make the story newsworthy. Editors and program directors always appreciate having plenty of advance notice of stories or events that might interest them.

Rival newspapers, TV and radio stations should all get exactly the same patient, persistent treatment. Any paid advertising that the organization uses should be fairly distributed to newspapers and radio stations.

The methods the publicity committee may use to inform the community are many—newspapers and magazines, radio and television, circulars and pamphlets, posters and displays, telephone or door-to-door canvassing, interviews and many others.

It takes a little research, and some careful evaluation of results to choose the right channel for every message.

A long-winded circular will not sell a person who is interested in only a single fact about the organization's program. A morning radio, or TV spot about leisure-time classes will usually stress women's interests because most men are at work, and children at school. Playground activities are of interest to parents as well as children, so a few posters in the school-yard will not do the best job for the playground program.

Once a publicity project has been set in motion, the results it produces should be watched and carefully tested. If the evaluations are disappointing, an additional effort may be arranged, or the method may be changed for one that will be more effective. See the *Evaluation* booklet in this series.

If the sale of tickets for a planned community event is not going well at the end of the first ten days, the evidence may point to a wrong guess by the publicity committee. Perhaps their advertisements were overshadowed by some local occurrence that took everyone's attention. But why wait? Action now—an increased number of canvassers, some new posters in the right places, or a strategically planned TV, or radio spot—may make up the lost ground and put the project on the road to success.

Writing for newspapers and magazines

The time-honored formula about a news story telling *who, what, when, where, why, and how* is still good. A community organization usually gives special attention to the *why* in its news stories so that readers will be able to see that their own interests are involved with the purposes of the organization.

Every news release needs a distinct theme so that the statements in it will be clear and factual. If a story is too general, or if it is built on several different ideas, the facts are apt to be vague and dry. (Sometimes, of course, an organization is interested in publicizing some broad idea, or in drawing attention to some subtle variations in attitude. The letters-to-the-editor column of the paper would serve the purpose better than the news column).

The first sentence or two of a news story are the important ones. They should contain an eye-catching fact, or the point of the story that carries the news value – never a dull list of names and a date. Many experienced newspaper and publicity people write the lead after they have finished the rest of the story.

Human interest, timeliness, the comments of well-known people, references to local citizens and local events will all improve the news value.

Simple words arranged in short, vivid sentences make a more lasting impression than a florid literary style. In fact, the best news writing is so clear that the reader is not conscious of its having any style at all. Words that the reader uses every day create images in the mind. A news story is no place for any of the specialists' jargon that may have crept into committee discussions of the organization's work. These new words, or old words used with new meanings, make foggy impressions in the mind of the general reader.

For novices at news writing, it is perhaps best to begin by writing down everything that could possibly be said, including all the dullest details.

The second step is then to choose from the hodge-podge of facts those that supply answers to who, what, when, where, why, and how. Arrange them in short sentences with active verbs. After that, the most striking feature of the story can be developed for the first paragraph.

If a news story can be kept to one page of typing, its chances of being printed are multiplied. So throw away the first draft with all those details before you are tempted to tuck them in somewhere.

Many verbs and few adjectives build interest and clarity into news stories. There is little need to pad out the story of an event with words like enjoyable or successful or brilliant if you state the facts that made it so. If you are tempted to say that an improvement has been gratifying or splendid, try designing a chart that will show exactly what the change has been.

Accuracy in releases is part of public relations. Almost everyone is annoyed at having his or her name misspelled, or at being identified as someone else. The paper is usually blamed for these things when they happen, so inaccuracies won't improve relations with the editor either.

Preparing copy

If copy must be written by hand, all the names should be in block capitals. But if at all possible, copy should be typewritten according to the generally accepted set-up. Here are the points to remember:

- ☐ Use double spaced typing on $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inch paper or $8\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$ inch (metric size) paper.
- ☐ Type only on one side of the sheets. Use wide margins; type at about 55 characters a line.
- ☐ Put the name of the organization, the name, address and telephone number of the publicity chairperson, and the telephone number of another officer in the upper left-hand corner of the first sheet.
- ☐ Begin to type $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way down the first sheet. This space at the top of the first sheet is for the headline, the editor's instructions, and perhaps a rewrite of the lead. (The editor will often have the lead re-written if he thinks the same story has been sent to other papers.)
- ☐ Do not split words at the ends of lines, nor sentences at the ends of pages. Try to end pages with complete paragraphs.
- ☐ If more than one page is needed for the story, put (MORE) at the bottom of the first sheet and number the following sheets.
- ☐ Following sheets should also have the name of the organization and release date at the top.

A sample press release

Riverville Little Theatre

Publicity Chairman –

J. L. Smith,

46 Main Street

Anytown, Ont. Tel. 947-4532

President –

William S. Brown, Tel. 591-6798

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(or the release date)

Shakespeare will make his debut in Riverville tonight. For several seasons the Little Theatre group has entertained local audiences with modern comedies. Some of the more experienced members of the company have long been ambitious to introduce the Bard in Riverville and tonight at 8:30 they will open in "As You Like It" at the Community Centre Theatre.

The director of the production, Mr. David Ryan, has commented on the enthusiasm and hard work of the group. He predicts that the Riverville players will do credit both to Shakespeare and to their home town.

Allen Smith will play Jacques and Georgina Brown will appear as Rosalind. Five new members of the group will have

(MORE)

Reaching your public

Newspaper news

The routine details of meetings are not news.

In order to have news value, releases describing meetings must stress any action of the group that is aimed at benefitting the people of the community, and the names of those who were active in the program.

When an upcoming public meeting is to have an important speaker, his or her name, background and topic are usually given in a news item. Many organizations make it a regular practice to ask each visiting speaker for a photograph along with his or her biographical notes. Copies of the portrait, which may also be used on circulars and posters, are then sent to the papers with the story of the coming event. Often as not, the editor will be unable to find space for the picture, but if it can be used, it gives prominence to the announcement.

When a release describes a program that has already taken place, the speaker's background and topic should be given again and the gist of his or her address outlined. The points in the talk that have special significance for the community should be emphasized. Any recommendations made by the speaker should be quoted, and great care should be taken that the quotations are accurate.

If reporters are covering a special event, they will welcome typed hand-outs giving the details of the program, including the names of those responsible, the text of an important speech, and other information that relates the work of the organization to life in the community. The stories they write for their papers will be more comprehensive and accurate as a result.

Editor's pencil at work. . .

How ^{does} ~~is~~ your school ~~meeting the challenge of~~ interesting the
parents in your education program? The Hometown
Association tried ^{it} ~~one approach is to this problem~~ through
~~meeting begun during the third~~ ^{our} annual in-service conference.
~~The purpose of the meeting was to promote some unity~~
^{We wanted to unify}
~~among~~ the forces which exert so much influence on ~~the lives~~
~~of~~ the learners in our community. ^{Our} ~~For the~~ first session, ~~which~~
was an open meeting. ^{We ed} ~~an invitation was extended to~~ the
general public ^{along with} ~~as well as to~~ the organizations represented on
the planning committee.

Photographs submitted with news stories for immediate release can be processed with great speed by modern big-city newspapers if they are already trimmed to 1-column, 2-column or 3-column widths. Newspaper columns are $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in 9-column papers, and 2 inches in 8-column papers. Large photos that must be reduced cannot be handled as quickly, but a great many small-town papers still use 8×10 inch glossy prints.

A small sheet of paper giving information about the picture should be attached with paste or rubber cement to the back of the bottom of each print, so the typewritten information shows.

From time to time, community organizations are the subject of feature stories in large daily papers and in some of the weekly papers and magazines. These are usually stories about community life that make use of a great deal more background material and have more emotional appeal than the short news items we have been talking about. The paper's photographer will often be instructed to illustrate the story with human interest or action pictures. They will want only a few people in each photo and they will welcome any suggestions about how interest and action can be introduced into the situations to be photographed.

Radio news

Local radio stations are always willing to give time to as many community activities as possible, provided that the material will interest a large number in the listening audience.

The demands on radio stations for public service time are always great. But the voluntary organization that has worthwhile programs to talk about will find the staff of the local station ready to co-operate. If at all possible, organizations should budget to pay for some radio time, just as they budget to pay for some newspaper advertising. Radio executives have been heard to complain that the community organizations expect their share of free radio time, but when they have money to spend for advertising, it all goes to some other medium.

Because radio people have little spare time for long consultations, it is a good idea to write to the program you think is most suitable, making a clear case for your organization as a community service. If an interesting theme is suggested, along with just a few details, the letter may get speedier attention.

Material for a radio spot or newscast must be even more carefully chosen for direct newsworthiness than stories for the papers. Platitudes, padding and insincerity of any kind are not acceptable.

Some radio programs feature short talks or interviews about community affairs. Special events may be tape-recorded and the edited highlights broadcast later.

Dramatic presentations are certainly effective, but it takes professionals to prepare and act them.

Local businesses or industries sometimes sponsor short public-service programs.

Television news

In addition to paid time on commercial TV stations, community TV is growing rapidly and offers a good opportunity to get your story across. (See *TURN ON! An Introduction to Community T.V.* Your field office consultant has copies.)

As in radio, the approach is best made by a letter addressed to the program in care of the station. The letter should be sent several weeks in advance of the project and it should be brief. It need contain only a suggestion for a theme and the names of some people who might appear. The name, address and telephone number of the writer is essential.

If the station is interested in the material, the program director will advise the letter writer. The notice may be short. At the studio the person who is to be interviewed will meet the producer and perhaps the MC. It is sensible to have some concise material prepared in advance. One side of a 3 × 5 index card will usually hold all the important facts, even double-spaced.

If too many details are included, the producer may leave out something important to the organization, in order to fit the interview into his or her program schedule.

The representative of the organization should be prepared to chat about the information not to recite it.

Bill Thompson

Good Neighbor's Club

Meets three times monthly for community improvement

Annual carnival – St. George's Hall – 8:30 to 10:30 p.m.

Thursday & Friday evenings, January 30 and 31

No admission charge

Home-baking

Handicrafts

White Elephants

Proceeds to help pay for nursery school equipment.

Clothes that photograph well are important on the television screen. No sharp black-and-white contrasts and no large distracting patterns.

Posters and displays

The style, the coloring and the tone of the message on a poster or exhibit must fit the role that the organization plays in the community. Like all the other publicity tools, these must serve to interpret the purpose of the organization.

Posters for the art club's annual show of paintings should not suggest a circus or variety bill. A display of children's handicrafts should be gay and direct, not arty.

The whole message of a poster should jump right out at people passing as they go about their business. The passer-by will probably not take more than 10 or 15 seconds to look at it. The lettering should be as large as possible (some say as much as 2½ inches high), and the words few.

Strongly contrasting colors help to make a poster readable from a distance. These are the attention-getting combinations of colors in order of their readability: black on white, yellow-orange on black, white on red, white on green, white on black. The list shows no combinations of complimentary colors, such as red and green or blue and orange, because these tend to fade into each other at a distance.

Flurries of quite small but brilliantly colored posters are eye-catching in publicizing a special event. Sometimes they are backed with adhesive and attached to the rear bumpers of automobiles.

Posters ought to be removed just as soon as the event they refer to is over.

Displays and exhibits are usually used at conferences, conventions, or fall-fairs where the passers-by have a little more time (perhaps an average of several minutes). Some organizations have made effective use of simple displays in theatre lobbies and shop windows.

Though a display has more elements and details than a poster, its message must be presented dramatically with few words. The place for facts, figures, charts and graphs is in the leaflets handed out to those who show special interest.

Both posters and displays may be enlivened with large photographs, never smaller than 8×10 inches. A photographic record of the organization's activities, with special emphasis on human interest and action, should be taken throughout the year so that there is always a group of negatives to choose from.

Advertisements in magazines are a constant source of color schemes, tricks of emphasis, lighting, and new ideas for appealing to the average person.

The symbol or logo

A symbol often comes to represent an organization and its objectives in the public mind, for example, the Kiwanis 'K,' the Red Cross, the Rotarian Wheel, the Y triangle, the United Way hand.

If the name of the organization is long or formal it may not carry a clear suggestion of its purposes. A well-exploited symbol will give the group a handle by which the general public can identify them. But to become firmly associated with the organization's work and purposes, the symbol must be publicized continually. It should appear on every publication and be displayed at every opportunity.

By using the symbol occasionally as the central theme of posters, displays, circulars and news stories, the publicity committee can build up its meaning.

A symbol should have a simple colorful design so that it is easily recognizable in a wide range of sizes. Care must be taken to represent it carefully. The colors, the details and the proportions of the design should never be varied.

Circulars, pamphlets and reports

Information can be provided directly to a large number of citizens through circulars and direct mail folders and pamphlets. But the information will have little effect on public attitudes unless the recipients can be persuaded to read the pieces before committing them to the handiest waste-basket. The chief trick here is to give the readers, in words they know, the facts that interest them, facts that cast light on their problems. It is also important to make a good beginning with a short, apt title, an eye-catching design, or with attractive illustrations. The circulars of commercial advertisers are full of ideas for color and styling. Make a collection of the ones that attract you most. Analyze them for the factors of their appeal.

Most community organizations try to avoid that expensive look in their printing that may imply that they are reckless with their funds. On the other hand, careless preparation and the cheapest kinds of printing may spell out inefficiency. Simple, bold designs and neat printing suggest an attitude of care with economy.

The ideas that finally develop into the theme of the message in a pamphlet may emerge from committee discussions. But the final re-writing tends to get watered-down and colorless. A group is more apt to settle for jargon words that have special overtones of meaning for them but not for the ordinary reader.

The preparation of printed material, from the original inspiration to the final product, takes time. Always a great deal more time than anyone without long experience might expect! So many things can happen to cause delays. Ideas and information may be slow to jell. Facts may have to be checked. Paper may be out-of-stock locally. Printers or photo-finishers may be over-loaded with work. Half-tones may be delayed. Extensive corrections may be needed at the last minute.

The only defense lies in getting an early start.

Once the final wording is arrived at, and the illustrations chosen, a rough lay-out may be prepared for the printer's estimate of the costs. The lowest estimate is not always the best buy.

Unless the committee has some experienced members, it will have to depend a good deal on the printer's advice and suggestions. That may be another reason for dealing with a high-quality printing firm. The union-shop label on some of the organization's printed matter may be an important item of public relations in some communities.

The usefulness of the annual report as a public relations tool has already been mentioned.

Used for publicity, the traditionally dull form of many annual reports may need a face-lifting. It may be more readable if it is divided into sections that are each linked to a central theme. It will need a bright cover and perhaps a new title if it is to become a report to the community. The padding and platitudes that result from the compulsion to say something under every traditional heading will have to be rooted out.

The annual report might not be distributed as widely as a circular, but it could provide a public source of complete information about the organization's work. Adequate information, honesty and perfect frankness are the best weapons against irresponsible criticism, hostility and damaging rumors.

Management of mailing lists

Most organizations are continually looking for new members, or new support for their programs. The names and addresses of potential members or subscribers must be added to the organization's mailing lists or they will shrink every year as people change their interests, move away or die. The collection of these new names must be done systematically and carefully if the list is to produce good results on every mailing.

Keeping the mailing list up-to-date is a regular, continuous task. People in our modern communities are constantly on the move and it takes careful work to maintain a useful list. This is a job of maintenance to be done every week or month.

Conversations

Public attitudes are often deeply influenced through everyday conversations, just the ordinary passing-the-time-of-day between neighbors in the super market and at informal social gatherings. It is a slow process but, for that very reason, it is one of the most effective developers of public opinion. Preoccupied with the scramble for newspaper space, TV and radio time, many community organizations give scant attention to day-to-day public relations and word-of-mouth publicity.

In face-to-face conversations, members of the organization have the advantage of being able to hear the opinions and points of view of their neighbors. In this way, conversation serves as a means of gathering ideas to use in planning.

Conversation is also important in the liaisons between different community organizations. When overlapping activities, unproductive rivalry or misunderstanding between groups is causing confusion and apathy, a representative conference provides opportunities for face-to-face conversations. Such community conferences have been known to clear the air and improve relationships to such an extent that the whole community profited from them. Good conversational liaisons between groups can pay big dividends through the co-operative exchange of special help, material, advice and ideas.

It is possible to accomplish a good deal of business over the telephone when the call is between people who know each other well. A telephone conversation can never take the place of a face-to-face talk, but the telephone does permit us to reach a large number of people in a short time. It can best be used for polling opinions on a simple question, or for communicating a short item of information. In collecting data, or polling opinions by telephone, care must be taken that the persons interviewed represent a cross section of the community so that any conclusions will be applicable to the whole community.

Commercial institutions pay a good deal of attention to the telephone manners of their employees. They believe that care and patience in handling telephone inquiries is an important item of public relations. Any community organization that maintains a central office must also give attention to this point.

Interviews

Meetings may sometimes be arranged between organization officers and key people in the community to obtain information, to get clear definitions of attitudes, or to enlist support for a project.

The interviewer must prepare carefully for the meeting in order to obtain the result wanted without overstaying his or her welcome. The appointment should be made well ahead of time and the purpose of the interview should be stated clearly.

Delegations

Delegates may influence an individual whose support is desired, or an organization such as a civic body. Considerable planning should be done before a delegation is assembled and the aid of a civic or municipal body is sought. A brief should be prepared stating the aims of the delegation and the people selected should be representative of the groups that support the proposal.

Sponsorships

Another common method of promotion is to claim the support of name persons or organizations influential in the community. The weight of their reputations, it is believed, will encourage people to support the project, and their sponsorship may encourage financial backing.

The selection of this sponsorship must be suited to the purpose of the project so that the people who should be attracted into the organization will not be repelled. For example, sponsorship by a brewery is not likely to help the development of a church organization.

Canvassing

Door-to-door campaigns for financial or other support for a project have become a commonplace of community life. Nevertheless, a group that has not actually been involved in the organization of such a canvass will find it difficult to realize the amount of planning, preparation and training necessary for success. This planning is particularly important when canvassing for financial support in towns and cities. It is a highly competitive enterprise even where a United Way program is in operation.

Summary

The standing of an organization in its community may be summed up as its public relations.

The pride the community is able to take in the organization's achievements will depend on what the organization does; good public relations must be earned.

Publicity is what the organization has to *say* about what it does.

Some points about community organization publicity seem to recur under almost every heading. The key ones are:

- the job to be done is one of interpreting purposes and relating them to the lives of the individual in the community.
- the language and the point of view of publicity writing must be that of the reader.
- nearly every publicity job needs a central theme to make it effective.
- only skilful scheduling of time will enable a committee to meet all the deadlines it faces and produce an effective job when it will do the most good.
- every officer and member of an organization has some responsibility for the organization's public relations.
- the best publicity committee ever set up cannot make silk purses from sows' ears; ballyhoo cannot make a dull program into a lively one.

Further reading

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Ministry of Culture and Recreation (Community Information Services) *The Printed Word; Public Relations Primer: How to promote your organization without spending a fortune*.

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